

Astarte's Knight -The Story of a F-Rank Demon's Way to Success

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Synopsis :

My life of being continually abused by my parents ended when I was 18.

The next time I opened my eyes, what awaited me was my life as the lowest class of demon "Ghoul", protecting one of hell's castles, Astarte Castle. The lowest class of demon, "Ghoul", was my new life.

I was scorned by the demons in the castles for being such a weak, low ranked monster. But my fate was changed when I met the castle lord's daughter, Astarte (age 10).

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The 1st Story: Death and Birth

In the midst of my fading consciousness, I had the conviction of “Ah, I’m dying”.

In a few words, I was run over by a truck. My body has no sensation.

The fact that I can’t confirm what happened means something terrible definitely happened.

But the signal should have been green. Did the driver fall asleep?

Truly the worst kind of bastard.

Thinking back, it was a harsh life.

Mother is a woman who quickly broke into hysteria because of trivial things (I later understood the term “abusive parent”) and father is a NEET who hated my remarks of go work, go work.

As a bonus, the money I earned from working sank into alcohol and pachinko on the other side.

Because of this environment, I was unable to get a girlfriend these 18 years.

Wait, or was it because my charm is non-existent? Tahaha...

Well whatever.

I don’t have any attachments to this life.

Normally at this time, a person would recall the fun memories and people important to them up until now, but unfortunately, I don’t have

any of those.

The elementary school sports day where I ate a convenience store onigiri alone,

My classmates who messed around and said I stank, making fun of me, who had no clothes to wear,

The full-time employees who knew about my environment and looked down on my poor societal standing before work started.

All of them are my worst memories.

Everybody should just die.

Wait, the one who died was me. Hahaha.

Well, that's still good. It definitely ended my connections.

Please god, if there is a "next time" to life, make next time's guy somewhat more normal.....

I feel sleepy.....

.....

.....

.....othe.....

(TLN: so the hirigana is かあさ and I have no idea what it could be)

.....

.....

.....

.....nn?

Huh? I'm concious?

Not only that, but the pain is gone.

Is it possible that I'm alive?

Thinking that, I moved my body and felt something abnormal.

My body is awfully heavy, and I couldn't move like I thought.

"Ga...ah...."

It seems I let out my voice during that, but it's too harsh.

It's like a monster's.

Is my throat still dysfunctional after being run over?

"Gohoho", there was the sound of liquid flowing.

It seems that I'm set inside a transparent capsule.

Just when I thought of sorting out the situation, I heard the voice of another human for the first time.

"How is it? What are the results?"

There was an old man of about 40 years with a mustache there.

But his mustache was carefully trimmed, and there was no sense of dirtiness.

And his body was wrapped in clothes like those of a noble in the Middle Ages.

Is he someone involved with the hospital?

I don't understand why he's cosplaying though.

There was a woman beside the old man who talked to him.

The woman answered the question.

"It's just a "Ghoul". The potential level is also average."

"Fuun, rubbish again, huh?"

"What do we do with this person? Disposal?"

"Make it defend inside the castle. When the time comes, it should buy some time."

Saying that, the old man faced my direction again with eyes saying he's

looking even though it's garbage.

"However, it's ugly so don't let it come near the upper levels. Deploy it at 1F."

"Understood."

Finishing their conversation, the two people opened the door and left the room.

He said "it's ugly so don't let it come near".....

Some cruel words were said. I don't remember being born that ugly.

Suddenly, I saw the glass in front of me.

There, I noticed what kind of appearance and figure I had for the first time.

Just before, I said "it was a monster-like voice", but it wasn't at "like".

I was a complete monster.

My figure had a human form of walking on two feet, but my whole body is inflamed, with an appearance of being synthesized from slime. There are no nails, tongue, or nose.

Taking this opportunity, I also have no eyes, but how am I able to see things?

Just before the woman called me a "Ghoul".

Certainly this figure is undead. It has the impression of a corpse monster.

When humans are reincarnated, they might become a butterfly or cat this time – I heard these words many times, but the reality became more weird than in light novels.

It seems I became the lowest-ranked “Ghoul” after my reincarnation.
Are you serious?

【Rinne’s Research Journal】

Name: None

Race: Ghoul

Rank: F

Skill: None

Remarks: No special worth, an ordinary individual.

The 2nd Story: Observing and Understanding

One month passed.

From there, I was left in "1F"

I received no interference from anyone afterwards.

It was a mystery why my stomach never became hungry.

I considered it was probably the effect of becoming a "Ghoul".

Or rather, I only know that I'm a "Ghoul".

And because I did not eat, nothing came out.

I don't know if something will come out if I eat.

But as for how I passed this one month period, I didn't do anything.

Or rather, I couldn't do anything.

No matter what I did, my body would become annoyingly unmovable.

It's not like I have a lazy personality.

When I was alive, I think even I was on the side that worked often in the student proportions.

The cause is something else.

My thought is that even though there's no change, my body probably couldn't fully settle.

It wasn't a problem with my feelings, but a problem with my body.

Is this the limit of the creature known as a "Ghoul"?

At first I thought I'll be able to move freely if I practiced. I did a trial and error, but no results came out. It gradually became more stupid, so I gave up.

Right now, I passed the majority of my time spaced out, thinking what day it is.

This is probably the limit of the creature known as a "Ghoul".

On top of an ugly appearance, their movement is also dull.

I'm really being screwed around with.

However, it's not like I spent one month waving around a stick in style.

I observed my surroundings and understood the general situation inside.

Here is what would be called "Hell".

This is a stupid story, but I couldn't believe it when creatures clearly different from humans passed by my figure.

For example, a beast warrior walking on two feet, whose head changed into a wild boar's .

At first I thought it was headgear, but while observing the beast warrior pass many times, I realized that it was completely grown from the base of their neck.

For example, the crow accompanying that beast warrior, who understood human speech.

He exchanged words as equals with his friend, the beast warrior, while mixing in jokes rich with wit. His vocabulary couldn't be compared with a human-trained parrot.

There are still other strange creatures I met, but there's too many, so I don't plan to exhaust myself talking about them. Now, just what kind of world would have such creatures?

Like that, the assumption that I'm in hell forcibly grew.

And now, the building I'm inhabiting(?) is a "Hell Castle".

I can't move so I don't really know, but it seems like a considerably large building.

But I can't move so I don't really know.

By the way, I can't declare that "I'm inhabiting", because I don't know if doing nothing but standing upright can be called "inhabiting".

Next, about that old man I met in the beginning, it seems like that guy is this castle's lord.

That old man and the female researcher produces monsters like me day and night, and investigate the results.

If a strong individual is born and their skills seem useful, they're left in some suitable place in the castle like me. And in the worst case, they're

killed and disposed of.

I was not disposed of, but in this hell, the creature "Ghoul" that I've become seems to be the existence closest to the lowest social class.

I was deployed considerably close to the entrance and exit of "1F".

Because of this, a furious amount of people come and go, and I was able to guess the current situation from the conversations of the people coming and going.

Sometimes, the guys passing by use me as a sand bag.

A"Kaa, the castle lord's usage of demons is too intense, I can't deal with this-"

B"Idiot, what are we going to do if the castle lord hears of this?"

A"It's okay and besides, it's a ghoul. Want to play for a while?"

B"Oioi, it is really okay?"

A"No matter how many times we strike, this blockhead won't counterattack . It's not a human after all."

B"Seriously, your hobbies are bad. Finish it quickly."

Something like that.

Of course, they aren't serious, but tormenting in itself is an outlet for reducing their stress.

Naturally for me, I can't counterattack with this body, and only groan with an "Ahh.....".

The guys seeing this laugh.

I don't have a sense of pain so I can't feel pain, but that act makes me vomit.

Don't these monsters have a habit of being malicious like humans?
Seriously, I wish monsters would behave more like monsters.

Next, I tried interacting with my comrades.

At 1F where I was stationed, there are several ghouls other than me existing.

Those guys also move scarcely like me, and many generally stand straight during the day around the area.

I hoped those guys have the same reasoning as me, and I tried communicating many times.

"Gyaa...(Hello!)"

"Ahh..."

"Uoaahh...(The weather's good today!)"

"Ahh..."

"Agyaa..(You said nothing but "Ahh" since the beginning!)"

"Ahh..."

Something like that.

In conclusion, I gave up on communication with my comrades in one day.

I had the intention of having a splendid relationship with the people working before me, but I was taught how low my communication ability is.

It looks like I can't build a favorable relationship with corpses and it was just a splendid societal worker's dream of a dream

Though it's not like they're completely taciturn.

Or rather, their groaning voices raised in gloominess one by one.

Because of that, I migrated to a location separated from my kind on the same floor and spent a wonderful time there.

Thanks to that, I stopped being close to the castle's entrance and exit and was immediately made into a sand bag, but it didn't hurt anyways. The part of them with reason will stop them once they interact with another person and feel their side is better.

And then lastly—

"Umm, what are you doing today?"

The little girl sitting quietly next to me talked.

Her appearance looked around 10 years old.

It's this person again.

"Aaahh..."

I'll reply for now, but as I thought, I couldn't spin out words.

A ghouls vocal chords wasn't made to be able to converse.

"What is that? Interesting-!"

The little girl became delighted with a "kyakya".

It was a little girl-like action, but this little girl isn't just a little girl.

In the first place, from her appearance, she wasn't ordinary.

Golden coloured hair...up until there is still normal, but her pupils emitted a red radiance, and from her head grew two small horns whose shape appears like those of a goat.

Although she has the same figure as a human, wears the same clothing as a human, and talks the same way as a human, she definitely differs in nature from the humans I know.

This little girl's name is Astarte.

She should be... the daughter of this castle's lord, or in other words, the old man on the first day.

The castle lord, who said I was "ugly" and don't let it come near, undoubtedly lives in the top floor, and this child somehow sneaks out of her room, and carries her feet almost everyday to this lower floor.

And above all else, it seems she has an interest in me, the newcomer, and frequently talks to me.

"Hey, what should we play today?"

Even though she says play, she just finds it interesting talking to me one-sidedly.

We haven't done any playing-like playing.

I did not hate this girl.

I'm not a lolicon, but speaking honestly, after spending everyday without talking to anyone, it seemed like my head became strange.

Already, listening to this girl talk has become my only pleasure.

Ghouls don't need to sleep.

Do you understand the pain of passing 24 hours being only able to do nothing?

Honestly speaking, my feeling of making an effort in this life no.2 has become an empty cup in this one month.

At that time, what appeared was this Astarte.

Just the one-sided chat about ordinary things was pleasant, and her appearing is already the only thing that heals me.

"Listen to this. My father..."

The contents of her talk were solely on her father.

On the way, she always starts complaining.

But even that's good. In any case, I wanted to talk with another person.

I can't talk, so I wanted to listen to another person talk at least.

At that moment, a loud voice resounded across 1F.

"Astarte-sama!!"

Looking, an old butler, who wore an expensive-feeling black uniform, stood there.

"What! Don't use such a loud voice, Sebastian."

It was Sebastian.

"Didn't I say you can't come to such a lower level? Ghouls are inferior creatures who don't possess intelligence! They can't distinguish between friend and enemy! I don't understand what Astarte-sama is doing!"

"But always studying is boring. Besides, this child is super obedient. It understands my words, so I don't think they "don't possess intelligence"."

"It's just an individual who happens to be obedient! You don't know what it will do once it's excited...!"

Some awful words were said. It's like I'm a sex criminal.

"Fuun, so your saying that. But I like this child more than Sebastian!"

Saying this, Astarte hugged my slime covered left arm as if insinuating. Pettan (*flat*).

Normally this isn't a place for grinning or chuckling to yourself, but unfortunately, it's this body, so I felt no sensation. It's not because the

girl's body definitely has "nothing".

...I can't have such discourteous thoughts about the person supplying my only pleasure, right? Thinking about it common-sense wise.

The daughter of a high ranking person hugging an inferior creature.
Seeing this, there was the sound of Sebastian's veins popping.

"Get your mind back! I will report this to your father this time!"
"Ahhn!"

Saying this, Sebastian forcibly pulled Astarte off of me and took her with force.

While returning, Sebastian glared at me.

His target of education escaped, and as a bonus, a girl indirectly said he is below such an ugly creature.

I dare say Sebastian's heart was probably hurt.

He probably will get shouted at by this girl's father, the old man, and probably has unceasing anxiety day after day.

Do your best Sebastian.

I secretly cheered Sebastian on in my heart.

【Rinne's Research Journal】

Name: Astarte-sama

Race: Demon King Race

Rank: —

Skill: —

Remarks: The count would be angry if he found out I wrote something like this.

The 3rd Story: Pig and Moustache

"I made otou-sama angry..."

The next day.

Beside me, Astarte complained with teary eyes.

A huge bump appeared on her head.

Afterwards, Astarte was taken back to the castle's upper level by Sebastian.

It seems what awaited afterwards was a severe scolding and a sermon.

But in the end she still came here.

This child didn't reflect.

"Vah...(Don't mind)"

"What? Are you comforting me?"

"Ah...(I guess)"

"Un! Thank you."

Within the daily communication between me and Astarte, it's a miracle that conversation is established for a short while.

And consequently, her honorifics disappeared.

It's natural that I can understand Astarte's speech, but the reverse is amazing.

Of course, complicated conversations are impossible.

What is possible at the very most is an ordinary exchange between kindergarten children.

It seems she's able to interpret my speech and read my emotions based on my actions and speech in past situations.

This isn't just my self satisfaction, but it's amazing for her to have a good likelihood of guessing it right.

To read emotions from my eyeball-less, nose-less, and tooth-less face.

In reality, doesn't this child have a fairly good mind?

"Gah...(Is it alright for you to come today?)"

"Today? Otou-sama isn't in the castle today. So it's okay."

Not here? What is this.

"Otou-sama" should be speaking of that old man though.

Well looking at it from the standpoint of his health and mind, it probably isn't good secluding himself in this castle all the time.

The typical standard is gloomy, and the floors and walls are rugged.

Beyond being a castle, I think it's design looks like a dungeon from a RPG game.

Staying in such a place for long makes you depressed.

Anyone would become like that. Even I became like that.

Rather, I think Astarte should go outside more often.

Wait, why isn't the old man here?

"I don't really understand, but it seems great people are made to "kon-veen-""

Kon-veen-?

It should be "convene".

No matter which way, it was a talk I couldn't understand the point of.

There's no feeling of my image that such inhuman creatures are living wildly and freely, but do demons have things like class and society?

I imagine myself lowering my head with a "pekopeko" (*bow*) like an ordinary company employee when the old man passes by.

U~n...it's somewhat unpleasant.

It's a request for my convenience, but I wish monsters would behave like monsters.

I don't want to see such worthless giving and taking in such a world.

But there no meaning to imagining anything.

In the first place, I have no means of checking the world outside this castle. I have no interest too.

"But because of this, he said today is very dangerous."

Dangerous?

In what way is something dangerous?

In such a creature covered monster house.

“Usually Otou-sama is in this castle so there’s a magic barrier. Thanks to that bad people can’t enter.”

“Bad people”?

Haha.

What on earth is this child saying with these demon-like guys and monsters running rampant in the castle.

No matter how I see it, shouldn’t your side be the bad guys.

I would snort if my nose was like a human’s, but unfortunately my current nose is degenerate, and it doesn’t have the function of respiration.

Or rather I don’t need respiration itself for life activity.

Why am I living right now.

Don’t I feel the mysteries of life?

Even though I’m a corpse.

“But because Otou-sama isn’t here today, the strength of the barrier is weakened quite a bit. So getting attacked today is quite dangerous. But it’s okay because Sebastian and everyone in the castle is here.”

Fumu.

Speaking of which, a “castle” normally has the function of repelling enemies outside. So there’s obviously non-human “enemies” for me and these guys.

Just what monsters are they.

At that moment, an ear-splitting sound resounded in my head.

"Intruder Warning! Intruder Warning!"

"All of the castle's soldiers should eliminate them!"

What is this.

It's directly resounding in my head.

Intruders?

"Intruders! It can't be!"

Astarte opened both her eyes in surprise.

And she muttered with a sigh.

"The humans have come"

Humans?

I inquired about Astarte's words.

"Humans have stepped inside the castle..."

1 of hell's castles, Astarte Castle's first floor.

In the corridor, there were the footsteps of two humans.

One is a plump man, and another is a giant with a fearless-looking

moustache.

"O-,oi! is it really okay?"

"It's okay."

The other man replied to the flustered plump man.

"If the information I obtained is right, the castle lord isn't in the castle today. The fact we trespassed successfully without getting turned into cinders by the magic barrier is proof. Let's take this chance to kidnap that guy's daughter."

The moustache man's mouth corners raised into a broad grin because he was satisfied that the operation is going according to plan.

"But hey...what will we do if we are caught by those guys?"

"Haa?"

The other man already seized the collar of the plump man who vomited timid words.

"Hii-!?"

"Valuing your life? In any case, unless this goes successfully, we are nothing but scum who can only die a dog's death. It's too late to be scared of these monsters' bullshit."

"...O-,ou."

The plump man was speechless at the moustache man's cold, but on-point words.

His hands released the man's collar slightly.

"I need gold...gold to just raise my family..."

Those words weren't for the plump man.

He was speaking to himself.

The man muttered with a grumble as if instructing himself.

"You're also the same right?"

"A-,ahh..."

"Then stop being scared. Pull yourself together."

The man got up and the plump man clapped with a "pan".

"Y-,you. You should have came back from a battlefield. I'm depending on you..."

"I grew accustomed to killing humans, but I don't know monsters very well. Don't rely on me, go protect your own body by yourself."

"Ahh...u-,understood..."

This moustache man is a human who returned from a battlefield.

A man who unhesitantly chose a road avoiding his fears.

Honestly, it was scary covered all over with wounds, and his character was quite wild.

He strongly wanted to return.

That's what the man thought.

But right now, there's no reason to talk about this man, as it's the time to start quietly walking ahead.

"Gugyaa..."

"㇏!!"

A beast-like growl. Hearing this, the moustache man drew out a saber from his scabbard.

"Wh-,what is it."

"Don't you understand idiot? It's the enemy. Prepare yourself."

"Hii-..."

Saying this, the plump man prepared a weapon for the first time.

A battle axe with a length of around half his height.

It was an eye-catching object, but the wielder's lack of self-confidence is apparent and you can only imagine being killed by the weapon's looks alone.

To be blunt, it's just a weapon he bought with his parent's money because he thought it looked cool.

As it is, there were quite a few people who thought he is a plump man of valor after looking at the large build he's rich in counterbalanced with the expensive weapon, but neither his outer appearance nor the fearful look he's giving has any effect on the monsters.

(TL: sentence fixed, thanks forgetfuldreamer!)

Before long, the true colors of the growling noise appeared a few meters ahead in the darkness.

It wasn't just one.

5 bodies, 8 bodies, no, it was even more.

"Gruuu...!!"

"Gahh...!!"

What appeared were undead of the human figure variety.

Their whole body is decayed and they're completely covered by sticky slime-like bodily fluids .

They slowly approached, walking like carnivorous four-footed beasts.

"Ghouls?"

It was his first time meeting them directly, but the moustache man saw through their true colours immediately.

(A low-grade corpse eating demon who reacts to living humans and attacks them. Though they normally are dull and lazy things, they only get serious when eating humans. These guys don't have intelligence. It doesn't feel like a crime killing any amount of them.)

"Gahhhhhh!!!"

"Hii!"

"Step aside!"

Zashuu. (*slash*)

The moustache man kicked the plump man away, and cut down the ghoul trying to eat him.

The vigorously lopped off head drew a parabola, and rolled over to the plump man's feet with an unpleasant sound of "Gachari" (*click*).

"Hiii!!"

"Don't be scared of a ghoul, Pig! You should know this!"

Saying this, the moustache man lopped off the weak points of the attacking ghouls, their head, in a flash again and again.

And then he shouted.

"Search for the staircase first! The castle lord's daughter should be on a higher level!"

【Rinne's Research Journal】

Name: Pig Man

Race: Human

Rank: Below F. Decided because no value is measured.

Skill: Looking scared.

Remarks: An intruder.

The 4th Story: Human and Ghoul

"Humans stepped inside."

I carefully simplified and thought about Astarte's words.

So there are humans in this world.

They said "Hell" so I believed there were only monsters.

This guy I met, that guy I met, all of them have in-human headdress-looking animal heads.

Only the old man and his daughter, Astarte, have appearances narrowly close to humans.

There are horns growing on their heads and their pupils are always red, so their appearance looks more demon-like than human.

Because of this I thought that this world definitely had no humans, but it seems like they're perfectly here.

"Wh-, what should I do..."

Since earlier, Astarte would become extremely nervous.

It's my first time seeing her make such an expression.

"Gah! Auah...! (What's going on!)"

"Humans warred with us, the "Demon Race", in the olden days."

War...

Dangerous words were said all of a sudden.

"Normally Otou-sama would spread a "magic barrier" around this castle and bad humans would usually die just from intruding. But today, he went out because he had to take care of an unavoidable business."

And then Astarte muttered with a sigh.

"Why did the intruders have to come today..."

Astarte trembled with a "furufuru" (*tremble*).

It seems she was taught that the living beings known as "humans" are very scary.

If it was me, I would be very scared of the guys here though...

"I'm different from everyone so I can't fight...if a human finds me, I'll be killed. You too and I too."

"You understand that well don't you, jou-chan."

We were suddenly surprised by a voice coming from behind us.

Turning around, there was a giant man with a moustache.

The man grabbed Astarte's arm and pulled her up into his gaze.

"Kyaa!"

"Your totally trembling. To think the daughter of the castle lord would

be at such a low level. What is your parent thinking? Or rather I got in because he's not here. Haha."

"Re-,Release me!"

"I'm not releasing. Sorry, but your going to be sold off for a high price to a rich man after this. Come on, let's go."

Saying this, the man forcefully took her and went.

But, wait a moment.

"Gah...!"

I haven't fallen low enough to overlook the abduction of a little girl!

Moving my body, I faced the man and struck his back with all my strength.

Strangely, my body became light after I became hostile towards that man.

But my fist didn't reach that man.

"Oraa!"

From the side, another man struck.

From that force, I collapsed onto the ground.

"Ahhh..."

“So-something like a ghoul can’t oppose us mighty humans-!”

I looked at the guy who hit me.

A fat body with a pig-like face.

It was a pig human monster!

Ah, now that I look carefully, it’s a human.

“Haha! A small fry! A small fry!”

The man cut me many times with the tip of his huge battleaxe. Like he was tormenting me.

“Scaring me some time ago! What a demon race! You’re not that big of a deal! Hahaha!”

“Oi! Kill him quickly!! Stop playing around!!”

But it seems the pig man didn’t hear the man’s directions because he was excited.

He’s set on brandishing his weapon on me.

Ku...

Even though I won’t feel any amount of pain, it’s still dangerous at this rate.

In the first place why are they brandishing blades all of a sudden.

It’s a violation of the Firearm and Sword Control Law.

They must be crazy.

Thinking that, I prepared my fist.

Luckily, the opponent's individual blows don't have a great killing power.

I don't have a sense of pain, so I can't feel any pain.

Cut my flesh, and break my bones.

I will aim for one certain blow.

Perhaps planning to finish me off, the pig man entered a posture for a large swing for the first time.

This is it!

Taking in the calculations of my body's slow movement, I unleashed my fist the moment the man would feel the most pain.

My body moved slightly keener than usual.

It went as planned.

Well, the timing was a bit early, but my fist entered the man's face.

And then the man's face was smashed 20 percent uglier, and his body blew off for "about 3 meters".

"Buberashaaaaa!!"

...eh?

Doshaa. (*crash*)

The man I beat raised a loud sound, and lay on the floor.

"Idiot! It's because you made light of a ghoul's power!"

Faced the man convulsing with a "pikupiku" (*twitch*), the man who captured Astarte spat.

E~to...

When did I become superman?

Even though I moved like a rock up until now.

Whatever.

I faced the man who captured Astarte.

We stared at each other for a few seconds.

"...why aren't you following your instincts to come rush at me?"

"..."

"You, do you have intelligence?"

"..."

"Fuun, I don't care anyways."

Saying this, the man threw Astarte behind him and rushed at me.

"Kyaa!"

Astarte rolled across the floor with a "gorogoro" (*rolling*).

But right now, I don't have the room to turn and pay attention to her.

Judging based on his appearance, he's far stronger than the man earlier.

I didn't think of fighting him directly– but probably, I would be killed shortly if I did.

Which leaves only one thing to do.

"Die!"

The man's thrust pierced into my flank deeply.

Or rather, it penetrated through.

"Gauuu..."

Thereupon I put power into my abdomen with all my strength.

"!"

It seems the man noticed something weird. In the fact that he couldn't draw out the thrust sword.

"Ku-..."

The man released his sword, but it's already too late. I used my whole body to embrace the man.

According to the man's previous words, a ghoul is slow-footed, but it seems they have power.

Which means, if I stick to them and bring them into a contest of

strength, no matter how much skill the opponent has—I'll win!

It was the first moment the "Ghoul" self I despised up until now became my ally.

Bakigokibakibaki (*crack break crack*)

His bones made creaking noises.

"Guaahhhhh!!"

For a short while, the man struggled and tried to escape from me, but before long, his strength left him.

I confirmed that the man was incapable of combat, and I separated from him.

With only his killing intent not weakening, he glared at me while laying prostrate on the floor.

"Are you going to kill me? Do whatever you like. It's this kind of world after all."

And then using all his strength, the man breathed in with a "suu" (*breathe in*) and shouted.

"But don't you forget monsters!! Humans will be the winners in the end!! Humanity won't surrender!! Remember that!!"

It was a fierce shout.

Even more than the volume, it transmitted to the enemy a resolve of an absolute intention of never submitting even if one were to die.

I was reminded of the legend of a Heian period warrior monk, Musashibou Benkei.

Benkei, who worked like a young ox during his life, never fell on his knees even with countless wounds received, and died a noble death.

Well, that moustache is currently turned facing down on the ground, so he's below Benkei.

Nevertheless...

U~mu...

It seems the tension rised by itself.

I didn't talk on the scale of it's "humans" or it's "monsters" but...

It's just a story of me repelling the enemy because strangers appeared in the house and tried kidnapping that house's little girl but...

Why did it turn into a "Shingeki no K●●jin"-like story there.

I thought it was an incident on the scale of "Home Al●ne" at the very most."

It's not like I murdered anyone but...

"Uu...my head was hitt...it hurrts..."

「 ! 」

"!"

I found something good there.

It was Astarte, who rolled on the floor after the man threw her behind him.

After thrown roughly by the moustache man, it seems her head hit the ground.

Furthermore, a new bump formed on top of the bump she got from her father.

I approached Astarte who's shaking from pain with a "purupuru" (*quiver*), and in some way or other, explained what I wanted to say using hand gestures.

"Guaahh..."

"Eh? What?"

"Ahhh..."

"U-,un. I got it."

Saying this, Astarte briskly walked towards the man's original place with small steps.

Her appearance was of an ordinary girl appropriate for her age.

As expected, I'll definitely do something if someone tried abducting this kid.

Different from the warm feelings wrapping me, the moustache man looked at the approaching Astarte, and shuddered.

"What? A brat like this jou-chan is going to kill me herself? Hell castles sure are something else!"

"You're wrong."

"Aah!?"

Pointing out the man's misunderstanding, Astarte conveyed to the man the things I said.

"Please go back. While everyone hasn't come yet. This child said this."

Saying this, Astarte pointed behind her at me.

Hearing this, the moustache man was dumbfounded.

"...What was that?"

"Please go back. At this rate, "stronger children" will come from the upper floors, and they will overwhelm and kill you. So before that..."

"...In other words, your telling me to run away?"

"Yes."

"...That's what the blockhead pole over there told jou-chan?"

"Yes."

"...!!!!"

The moustache man's mood clearly worsened as the conversation with Astarte continued.

Soon a vein popped in his head, and he once again shouted with a fierce volume as if reaching the limits of his patience.

"Are you an idiot?! Ghoul's don't talk! Even if they could talk, and you tore them a mouth, they wouldn't say something like that."

"っ!"

"You bastards are scoundrels who want to cause severe trouble to the mighty humans! Don't show me your cheap feelings of justice after all this time! Just kill me already!"

Being shouted at, Astarte took a step backwards with a start.

But as if feeling ashamed of that action, she moved forward once again, inhaled with all her might, faced the man, and returned a shout.

"I'm not lying!!"

"Haa!?"

Astarte's small lungs spat out all her air in just one shout.

The girl inhaled in a large breath and once again shouted at the same volume.

"This child is super kind!"

She inhaled once again.

The next shout was longer.

"Even though it's being bullied and hit by everyone, it never does anything back!

It never said a single complaint even though it's left out from the other ghouls! Even now it went easy on you so it wouldn't kill you! It's a super kind kid!!"

Huh? I'm being thought of that way?...

But it's true that the other demons would frequently make me into a sandbag and I acted separately from the other ghouls.

It seems like Astarte frequently came to my place because her feeling of pity became too great. I have some mixed feelings about this.

"So go back!"

"Don't do...any more painful things to this child..."

Astarte had teary eyes.

But I believe these tears should be because of the fear from being yelled at by an adult man many times,

synergizing with the sense of security from being released from the fear of being kidnapped up until now.

It definitely wasn't because she thought of me.

Because in these 18 years, I was never loved, not even by my parents.

There's no way that such a little girl I got to know for one month would treasure me that much.

Something like me.

"...You'll regret it."

The moustache man heard Astarte's shouts, and said this as he stood up tottering.

Though he shows such an exhausted appearance, it seems he still has the strength remaining to stand up.

Perhaps he still plans on attacking if he somehow finds a chance.

I honestly shuddered thinking that.

"Go back..."

Astarte said this as she forcefully wiped the edges of her eyes with her palm.

It was a very frail voice compared to her earlier shouts.

From there it was silent.

The moustache man carried the pig man and left the place at a quick pace.

"Astarte-sama!!"

At the exact time the presence of the two men disappeared, countless footstep sounds were heard from behind us with a "gayagaya". (*clatter clatter*)

These should be the allies on the upper floors Astarte spoke of, right?

With this, I'm relieved.

Dobobobo..." (*drip*)

(TL: Unclear on this sfx. Assumed to be something like *drip*.)

I looked at my body discharging slime.

Haha, it's looks just like human blood. Though I'm a ghoul.

For now, I'm relieved with this... right?

Dosha. (*thud*)

Believing Astarte is safe, I collapsed there with a foul sound.

【Rinne's Research Journal】

Name: Moustache Man

Race: Human

Rank: Hypothesized to be worthy of D

Skill: Unknown

Remarks: An invader. On the side of high combat ability.

Ash: lol, when I was translating this, I spent 30 minutes frantically googling trying to find out what anime was named "Home __ron" (『ホーム・●□ーン』). Then, the moment I asked my friend for help, it hit me. Maybe this isn't an anime....OH WAIT ISN'T THIS "HOME ALONE"??? OTL

Can this even be counted as a cliff hanger? I mean it's chapter 4...and this is the MC we're talking about...

In case your wondering, Benkei is this noble warrior who went like you shall not pass on this bridge to buy time for his master to commit seppuku, and held off the enemies until he died in a standing position covered with wounds and arrows. It's called the Standing Death of Benkei.

(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benkei>)

The 5th Story: A Short 1 Hour Dream and Sudou-Kun

AUTHOR'S MESSAGE: ✕There might be people with feelings hurt. I'm sorry if this happens.

"This damned brat!!"

Saying this, my father hit my 6 year-old self with a blunt weapon.
But I can't quite feel the pain.

Nn? Ah, this is a dream.

There's too many places to tsukkomi at, so I gained self-consciousness early.

What was I hit with this time?

A beer bottle? An ashtray? Something like having my head grabbed and knocked into a desk also happened before.

It often ended without me having to go to the hospital.

Just how thick of a skull did I have.

Looking back on the guy that was me, I've always been uselessly tough.

Thinking back now, that probably made my parents become more severe.

Rather, if just one hospital incident occurred, my father and mother might have taken that chance to reflect and aim at becoming good parents.

...Nope, not happening.

I can make this absolute declaration.

At that time, the reason they hit me was...I really can't remember.

There might have been no particular reason.

If I can't remember, it probably wasn't something big.

In reality, they exercised violence because of trivial things like "I don't like that dis-pleasured look in your eyes" or "even though I talked to you, your response was late".

The reasons I understood were remotely few.

"Otou-san..."

My 6 year-old self stood up tottering after getting hit.

Oioi, he'll snap so don't talk to that guy, how reckless.

Let sleeping dogs lie.

The best plan is to wait for orders near the entrance right now.

Actually, it's the most peaceful when I'm not at home, but if he calls for me when I'm not in the house, he'll still hit me again later. How tiresome.

But it seems the me of this time couldn't do such an efficient way of living yet.

Slowly standing up with a "gugugu" (*groan*), my 6 year-old self continued to talk to my father.

"Otou-san..."

"Aah!? I taught you didn't I, brat! Sake, go buy some sake!

Saying this, my father threw several coins at the feet of my 6 years-old self.

All were old coins below 50 yen individually. There were around 15.

Just what kind of sake do I go buy?

But even one cup at a convenience store is 200 yen?

My father was dead-drunk.

Seriously, the poor shouldn't do such damned things.

(TL: not sure how to phrase sentence 貧乏なクセにこんな罰当たりな事してんじゃねーよまったく。) That's why we're always poor.

I think the 18 years-old me would have definitely picked up that money and said "I'll go buy some then, what would you like?", and leave with a smile while having poison in my heart.

Because of that, my father's mood would improve, and the house would become emptier for a while.

It was a plan where by the time I return, my father would be sound asleep, and by the time he wakes up, he would completely forget about the things he instructed me to do.

9 1 yen coins, 2 5 yen coins, 3 10 yen coins, 1 50 yen coin.

I had a total of 99 yen.

I could buy a tuna onigiri from the convenience store if I had 11 yen more, so I had the food expenses for one meal.

Bread is also good, but if your a Japanese person, your stomach won't be happy if it's not rice after all!

On the contrary, if I disobeyed my father here, what I would get is not a tuna onigiri, but several serious punches.

Probably to the extent where my handsome face would be pointlessly damaged.

It wasn't like anything would improve if I disobeyed my father here, so I would choose the way which finishes this quickly and quietly.

The best way to finish this without losing anything.

Adults are like that right?

But my 6-years old self didn't pick up the money.

Furthermore, I clung unto my dad.

Oioi, are you sane?

Still, isn't my lack of learning ability too much, just how idiotic was my 6-years old self.

"About the birthday..."

"Aah!?"

Aah...

I recalled that utterance.

At that time, my elementary school friend's birthday party was in my neighbourhood.

The class representative invited a guy like me to his house's birthday party, even though I had a shabby appearance because I never had good clothes bought and given to me.

Even now I still remember when he protected me from the worthless bullying.

Well, the end result wasn't that good though...

I was surprised when he invited me to their house's birthday party.

From my biased point of view, his house had a kind mother.

His house didn't have a father who stayed inside day and night.

He had one who always worked hard in a "bro-ker-age fi-rm".

I didn't know what a brokerage firm did at that time, but somehow, the fact it's amazing transmitted to me.

Looking at the wonderful house furnished with stairs ascending 3 floors, it was obvious that all children admired it.

That birthday party was the best time of my life.

Everyone ate Kentucky Fried Chicken!

The homemade strawberry shortcake filled with fresh cream which his aunt made for everybody!

That's the thing!

The quality of a fresh homemade cake with cream is certainly different than a store-bought cake!!

The moment I noticed that I seriously trembled...!!

Everyone ate a delicious feast (I later knew that all the children's parents, except for mine, called in to say their thanks).

Everyone exchanged presents (I was the only person who didn't bring a big thing, but no one said anything, and it was warmly received).

It was the most fun time of my life.

It was the most blessed time of my life.

And then, when the party's excitement reached its climax—I returned home.

Of course, I told an obvious lie of "something came up" so this and that person's mother wouldn't realize anything.

I realized, for some reason, my heart would be dyed in a murky black every time I felt happiness.

Even though I ignored it, I couldn't shake it off, and soon, the dark feelings in my heart exploded.

The me of right now clearly knows why I shouted out my feelings.

It was "jealousy".

"Why isn't my family like this?"

I felt the me, who sat and hugged his knees alone on the other side of my heart, ask this.

I ignored me with all my power, but that guy was very obstinate.

It was an image of me, who was sitting and hugging his knees while covered in a dark aura, floating and coming here with a "zuun" (*fast motion*).

While laughing with an ghastly laugh of "ufufufufufufufu".

Honestly, that's quite annoying. Go die.

It seems my old self was in a fairly crowded place.

But luckily, my 6 year-old self wasn't stupid enough to vent the feelings exploding in my mind on other people, and it finished where they were just a bit suspicious.

In order to prevent the side of the despair-like guy, who was sitting and hugging his knees, from coming out, I frantically kicked that guy's butt to the opposite bank.

I think my 6 year-old self was able to use reason to gain control of his emotions, only because my father and mother's frequent "tormenting" made me start learning the skill of reading other people's expressions.

Only there I thanked my father and mother's training.

Otherwise I would have vented my anger on the one rare family that was nice to me.

At that time, I requested "I want a birthday party too!!" to my father because of my feelings of guilt from leaving the party midway.

There wasn't really a basis for it, but I felt that if I invited the other person and they were happy, we would be even.

Thinking back now, it was a reckless action akin to suicide.

Naturally, what awaited was violence, and my birthday party was never held.

Did my 6 year-old self really want to hold a birthday party because of the feelings of guilt from running home from the party, or was it because I wanted to show my classmate "you and I are equal after all"?

I can't remember right now.

I don't want to remember.

"I want a birthday party like Sudou-kun's too, Otou-san."

My 6 year-old self haven't opposed my father yet.

There's one more thing I recall.

The me of that time had non-existent learning ability. But I still didn't want to withdraw.

I clung onto my thoughts of grasping at the straws of the humanity of the man known as my father.

"I don't give a damn, just do whatever you want."

"But I can't call them to such a house...there's lots of trash laid around, and we don't even have tableware..."

"Then go wash it yourself."

"Sudou-kun's house was clean."

"Sudou? Ahh, that family's rich. You, get along well with that family. Even you want to eat delicious things again, right?"

In other words, my father said I should leech off of the good people who were unusually kind to me.

Just how rotten is he.

"Even I want an otou-san like the one in Sudou-kun's family...!"

"Ah!? What did you just say!?"

Shit, my father is on the verge of snapping.

Please shut up, any more above this and.

I begged like this, but this is a dream to begin with, a dream showing me my past memories.

Right now, I wasn't able to interfere.

In other words, a speech resulted, as if my 6 year-old self ignited a dynamite fuse within himself.

"Why does otou-san drink sake all the time? Why don't you work!? Everybody works! Even though everybody is normal, why is it only my family is strange! I wish I was never born!!"

"This son of a bitch, if I let him say what he wants..."

Ahh mou, I'm really embarrassed...

Even a dark history has a limit.

From top to bottom, this truly is the worst and shittiest nightmare.

My father hit me with a "gan" (*wham*) and my dream ended.

Author'S Message :

I planned to make it simple, but I ended up using 1 chapter.

Here is the low social standing of the protagonist.

It will only go up from here.

The 6th Story: Astarte and Birthday

"Hey, is it really okay?"

"Yes, there are no problems."

Nn?

I woke up in a capsule filled with green liquid.

It was the same place where I was born.

Surrounding me were tubes connected into the capsule, and ahead of those were various overflowing machines.

"...Hey, is this child okay?"

"Yes, because the natural healing power of Ghouls are on the high side. To the point where it would have been fine even if it wasn't taken here."

Looking at where the voices came from, Astarte and the female researcher I met on the first day were there.

Astarte clutched the ends of the woman's white robe and pulled on it with a "guigui" (*pull pull*).

"It'll definitely heal?"

"It'll definitely heal. Or rather, it's already almost completely healed."

"Absolutely definitely? Scars won't be left?"

"It will absolutely definitely heal. No scars remain. Or rather, even if such a monster has a scar or anything...(cough cough)"

"Did you say something?"

"I said nothing."

"This child saved me and is my life savior! You definitely have to treat him kindly! I won't forgive you the next time you insult him!"

"Yes, yes...understood, understood."

The woman in the white robe said this, and lightly dealt with Astarte. She looked just like a housewife involved with her child during cooking.

"What if your lying?"

"I'll swallow 10 thousand Holy Sword Excalibur."

What is that promise.

Hell's local rules?

So scary...

Perhaps because Astarte finally became relieved after she made the woman say such a scary promise, she let go of the woman's white robe she's been grabbing up until now, and breathed a sigh with a "hou" (*phew*).

"I'm glad..."

It seems like she was quite worried about me.

Such an experience is rare for me.

My parents and surroundings always gave me trash treatment.

Who would be worried if someone like me got injured?

This experience might actually be my first time.

I'm honestly quite happy.

"Astarte-sama, if you don't go back soon, Sebastian-sama will snap quite a bit."

"Bu-,but this child..."

"I'm looking over him so it's fine. I won't let anyone touch him with even one finger. So please go back."

"But..."

"How about the fact that if you make Sebastian-sama mad again, he won't forgive you the next time you meet it? It's wiser to return here."

"U-, un..."

Astarte left for her room with a bit of reluctance.

Pushuu (*pshhhhhh*).

Ah.

I just realized it, but there's an automatic door here.

Despite being called hell, this room is awfully modern.

"Then, see you later."

Just before going back, Astarte faced me and loudly waved her hands with a "bunbun" (*shake shake*)

I thought of returning a wave, but my dull body didn't make it in time.

But I moved relatively keen and nimble during that time...

My body ended up returning into the usual blockhead pole.

How unfortunate.

It seems the creatures known as Ghouls are only keen and nimble during battle.

Or rather...probably only when humans attack.

In my original world, there were many creatures who only moved keen and nimbly when seizing prey.

Charmeleons, sea angels, and other various things are like that.

In this world, those things seems to be Ghouls.

But if I can move keen and nimbly sometimes, isn't it fine being able to do that normally?

Just because sea angels don't move violently when they aren't hunting prey, doesn't mean they can't show their true abilities when a prey doesn't appear before their eyes, right?

As expected, I don't really understand Ghouls.

With Astarte gone, the white robed woman now approached me.

This woman has a near human appearance, but as expected, she isn't human.

"Even so, for the "castle lord's" daughter to be this attached. I thought it was just a failed product, but for some reason, it's quite...interesting."

The woman brought her face near the capsule, and stared at my face fixedly.

Honestly, it's quite embarrassing for her to come this close.

Her oppai pushing against the glass became something quite amazing.

Isn't it fine for me to say that it's already the violence of fat?!

If it was me when I was alive, this would definitely be a situation where I would lean forwards towards that place.

I'm troubled with where to look.

The woman gazed at my figure with a "jirajiro" (*stare~~~*).

What is it...

By any chance is she thinking "Ara, this man has a surprisingly handsome face...I particularly like his wide gaping empty eye sockets."

Or maybe "I like his widely exposed ribs"?

What should I do, I'm quite excited...!

And now, a dazzling science rom-com between a big-boobed female scientist and a non-human starts...

"Pu- (*pfft*)"

The woman stopped gazing at my figure, and snorted.

The start of a science rom-com... was it?

"But Astarte-sama said some nonsense like "it has intelligence". Such an ugly creature can't possibly have intelligence. It doesn't have a brain tissue, after all."

"Gah! (What was that!)"

"Whaat? Looks like it's angry. It's like it actually has intelligence! As if"

"But it's an achievement. Something like protecting Astarte-sama from trespassing humans on the day the count happened to not be here. There must be "something good" inside, so look forward to it."

Saying this, the woman left the room.

Pushuu (*pshhhhhh*).

The automatic door was surreal.

The top floor of 1 of hell's castles, Astarte Castle.

There, the castle lord, who could be called a "count", and his daughter lives.

One room's door was vigorously opened with a "Pan!" (*bam*).

"Astarte!!"

"Ah, otou-sama! Welcome back."

"Are you alright! My dear daughter! I heard the whole story!! The humans didn't do anything violent to you right!?"

"U-, un, I'm fine! Ghouls protected me from the humans!"

"Ghouls did...? I always tell you it isn't good to go there, and this time, to turn into that...ahh, but that doesn't really matter. Anyways, I'm glad your safe. If something happened to you, I wouldn't be able to live!"

"Otou-san's exaggerating too much, mou!"

The count gently hugged Astarte body as if handling porcelain.
That action is full of affection.

My life is all for the sake of my beloved daughter, Astarte.
That's the motto the count adopted.
It's absolutely not because he's a lolicon.

The hug lasted around 10 seconds.

This gave, to the count who was Astarte's guardian, a bliss that could not be replaced by anything.

(TL: Sentence fixed, thanks Valryssian!)

"Don't worry otou-san, Astarte doesn't have a single wound!"

Astarte stuck out her non-existent chest with a "ehen!" (*showing off*).

"Ahh, I'm really glad your safe."

Saying that, the count changed the conversation topic.

"Right, Astarte. The present for your birthday next week. What do you want? I haven't asked yet.

"Eh? You remembered?"

"Isn't that a given!! Are there any fathers in this world who wouldn't celebrate their children's birthday? If I find such a person I would turn them into cinders! HAHAHA!! Now, what do you want? Say anything you want!

"E-to, e-to..."

Suddenly being asked, Astarte held her head with both hands and thought while perplexed.

This action from such a cute daughter is also one of the things that soothed the count.

"Hahaha, it seems you haven't decided yet! Just say anything. I'll give you the thing you want!"

“Yes! Thank you very much otou-sama! Then, there’s only one thing I want right now, but...”

Hearing the previous words, the count frowned, but accepted it in the end,

Anything is good, if he can see his daughter’s face of delight.

It’s absolutely not because he’s a lolicon.

...Probably.

【Rinne’s Research Journal】

Name: None

Race: Ghoul

Rank: F

Skill: None

Remarks: A strange individual, who Astarte-sama frequently claims has intelligence.

The 7th Story: Daughter and Father

Just how much time passed after I woke up.

I've done nothing but float inside the green capsule with a "yurayura" (*shake quietly*).

Uo~i, when can I get out~

Since then, a reasonable amount of time passed, but nobody came into this room.

Not even Astarte, the white robed woman, nor the old man.

By any chance, did everyone forget about me after leaving me here?

That day, the world was suddenly engulfed in an armageddon, and everything except this castle was annihilated...

Or maybe the humans couldn't bear the tyrannic rule of the Demon Race and rised in rebellion, and Astarte and everyone are...

I already got tired of killing time with these decadent delusions.

Also, the place about the tyrannic rule of the Demon Race was my delusion.

I don't know about this world's societal structure.

At that moment, a change finally occured.

Pushuu. *pshhhhhh*

The automatic door opened.

"Rinne! Faster, faster!"

It was Astarte. The white robed woman, who Astarte beckoned and called Rinne, also entered.

The white robed woman started to play around with the machines close to me with a "gachagacha" (*clatter clatter*).

Astarte did nothing but urge her on with "Faster!"

But that was impatience, so nothing came.

She had a cheerful appearance just like a child lining up for a toy shop on it's sale day.

Docha (*charge*).

Soon, I was ejected from the capsule, and I stepped on the floor I haven't been on for a while.

Ooh...

Different from the time when it was light in the capsule, the feeling of several times of gravity weighed on me.

I feel how much I missed this.

"Right, we need to introduce you to otou-sama first!"

Saying this, Astarte lead me out of the room.

She took me to the upper floors inside the castle.

By the way, what moved was the elevator.

Though I should say it isn't the common elevator that I know, as the room is exposed, and the jagged sawblade-like metal railings made sounds.

The top floors were completely different from the places I've been up until now.

I see, this certainly isn't a good place for something like a ghoul to enter.

The places we arrived at in the top floors were polished with a "pikapika" (*sparkling*), and the rough lumber and cave-like bottom levels completely changed into delicate high class things.

While I was dumbfounded by this spectacle, I was brought into one of the rooms.

The old man, who said I was "ugly" and cast me away, was there.

Because this place has the most gorgeous appearance so far, I'm guessing that here is the old man's study room.

"Otou-sama!"

Astarte introduced me to the old man, who looked as if he didn't remember me, and the old man started evaluating me.

"Fumu, this individual is, hmm... I can't see him as anything other than

an ordinary ghoul..."

"Nee, otou-sama! I want this child to be my knight! Please!"

Knight?

I feel as if a word which couldn't possibly match with my decayed character design came up.

"...Astarte, do you understand what your saying right now?"

"I understand! A "Hell Knight" is a person who serves near the castle lord! For this reason they undergo a "Rank Up", and is handed an above average power! I learned this from Sebastian!"

"Exactly. You studied well. Going by the textbook, a 100 point answer."

The old man's tone changed slightly after praising Astarte's studying.

"If there is one thing wrong, it's that you didn't take into account hell's unwritten rule, Astarte."

"Un-writ-ten rule?"

And then the old man began to speak with tone slightly colder than before.

"Choosing a knight is to give a part of the hell castle's power to worthy and promising elite demons, like liches, spectres, and vampires, using the

castle lord's magical power amplification machine. This is a rank up. I have never seen nor heard of a castle lord choosing a ghoul as a knight, much less making it rank up."

Thereupon the old man closed the book he was reading with one hand and stood up from his chair while looking at me.

Then making a grim face, he said.

"Certainly I allowed that ghoul to be your birthday present. Honestly I don't believe it, but if your story is true, that ghoul is a benefactor who saved my daughter's life. Let's thank it. But a knight is still a different case."

The old man put his hand on Astarte's head in order to warn her.

"I won't say anything bad, but you can have that ghoul as a pet. Something like making a ghoul into a knight can't be said, even as a joke. If that happened, you will forever become the laughing stock of the other "castle lords" by dawn. Regarding the knight, I will think over it carefully and think over it carefully again before selecting in the future, so you don't have to worry about it."

After her father said this, Astarte had an expression like a 5 year-old child whose important toy broke.

"...Certainly, if his child is to be made a knight right now, the magic power will be taken from otou-sama. If otou-sama says this, then I can't do anything. But...then! If my magic power is given to this child—"

"Don't say such unreasonable things, Astarte. You're still young, and you probably can't control your own magic power. If you do something unreasonable, the both of you will just suffer."

"I take all the responsibility for this child! So please use my magic power and make this child into a knight!"

""Responsibility" isn't a word that a child can use. That's something for us adults to do.

In his own way, having to deny Astarte's wish seemed painful for the old man.

A trail of cold sweat ran down his cheek.

The old man breathed a sigh with a "fuu" (*sigh*) and reclined on his chair again.

"Isn't it fine...you'll be with that ghoul from now on, so just this much for now."

"I don't like just this much."

"Astarte..."

Why did Astarte defy her father this much...

Certainly, she often complained about her father to me, but I didn't think it was in a way where she actually hated him.

Astarte bowed to her father again.

"Otou-sama, I can't have this child become a knight no matter what?"

"Ahh, I won't yield on that"

"No matter what...?"

"No matter what."

"It's no good even though I'm begging this much?"

"No matter how much you beg, it's still no good."

"Fu-...gusun...gusun...uuu..." (*sniffle sniffle*)

"Uuu!? I-, it's no good even if you pretend to cry!!"

He's shaking hard...

"Nee, otou-sama. It's a wish from Astarte! Is it no good...no matter what?"

"Even if you do a cunning action like upturned eyes, no is still no.

Blood is coming out of your nose, old man.

"Is it no good...no matter what?"

"It's no good no matter what."

" ... "

" ... "

I believed that Astarte lost.

After all, parent and child relationships are those kind of things.

If the parent felt like it, the child would always lose.

This is an absolute law of the supporting person and the supported person

If you hate it, there's no choice but to be independent, and to protect yourself by yourself.

It's not like I think this old man said anything wrong up until now, so isn't it fine?

It looks like my treatment will get better, but it's not like I want it to get that much better.

It's fine being a pet.

I'll try my best to wave my tail.

However...

Why is it my inner heart is somehow becoming sad.

With all means used up, the conversation paused.

The room's atmosphere became quiet.

Only Astarte's worrying and inner frustration building up transmitted.

With this, the conversation is over—such an atmosphere ran in the study.

Then, Astarte suddenly dropped a bomb.

"I'll tell mom you cheated on her."

"!!"

It was just a small mutter with a "boso" (*whisper*), but that utterance certainly etched itself into me and the old man's ears.

"A-, A-a-a, Astarty...since when did you learn such a cunning method? I-,i-i-i-i-i-n first place, I never cheated on her."

Aren't you shaking hard!

"If you never cheated on her...what is this?"

Astarte threw several sheets of paper-like things towards the old man with a "pi" (*flap*).

It seems like those are this world's photos.

"Th-,those are...!"

"These are the photos taken when otou-sama went to the capital recently. Who are these women?"

It looks like the middle of a buffet party.

Holding wine in one hand, the old man, who had a flushed face, was surrounded by young human-form demon women.

If there is one word that this scene says, it would be harem.

"The people here, and the people there. Besides, for otou-sama to make such a face even though okaa-sama is here..."

Looking closely, a women was pushing her breasts on the old man.

And he did not dislike it, but rather was grinning and delighted.

Looking at her father with cold eyes, as if she was seeing garbage, Astarte declared.

"While I was being kidnapped by humans, otou-sama was playing around with women."

"Th-, that's because the people in the castle were disappointing...and who would have expected humans to intrude at that timing!?"

"Are you making excuses? The lord of a castle. Are those the words of a person standing above other people?"

"Gunununu..."

Huh?

Like this, is it possible that the old man is at a disadvantage?

"I won't let you feed me birthday cake with an "ah-n" anymore."

"Not that...for the love of God, not that!"

What is this old man doing, he should be old enough to know better..

"Then is it okay for this child to rank up? It is okay to make him into a knight?"

"No, that is..."

The old man still hasn't given up yet, and muttered ambiguously.
But Astarte heartlessly completely cut off the old man's path of retreat.

"It's okay, right?"

A full-faced smile. But something was different from normal in that smiling face.

The definite existence of overwhelming pressure.

Soon, the old man's spirit broke.

"Yes..."

Completely defeated by his daughter, the old man slumped, and hung his head over the desk.

That figure made me think of a gig boy lying on a desk, frantically pretending to be asleep during lunch break.

(TL: No idea what reference ギークボーイ refers to, and google suggests to me it might be related to Earthbound, but I have absolutely no idea)

A speechless sorrow floated.

But the daughter mercilessly kicked this fallen father.

"Then otou-sama, please rank up this child right now."

"Eh!? Isn't that what your responsible for...!?"

Astarte coldly forsakes her bewildered father.

"Well I can't control my magic power right? In that case, this time, above approving to make it a knight, isn't logical for otou-sama to be responsible for doing it?

"Ce,-certainly!"

Your completely won-over...

Just how weak are you to your daughter.

"No, but..."

"Is there a problem?"

"None..."

The old man was easily defeated before the smiling and approaching Astarte..

And then Astarte turned towards me with "her usual" smile.

"Isn't that great! Then, let's go together!"

Females are scary...

But apart from that, there was a feeling filling inside of me.

It was a feeling of exaltation.

Leaving aside Astarte's means, right now, she made her own father surrender using her own power.

That is one of the things I have never accomplished up until now.

Well, I gave up from the start, because this way is more easy for me.
Before I realized, I stopped expecting the things I want or the things given to me.

Because I was scared of being betrayed if I expected something.

It was a composition of a child who won triumphed over her parent.
This was such an trivial exchange, but at that time, I felt a small, but definite sense of elation.

【Rinne's Research Journal】

Name: Astarte-sama

Race: Demon King Race

Rank: ——

Skill: ——

Remarks: "I can win against father.." She might have been able to use this line when she was being power harassed.

The 8th Story: Status Rising and Naming

Me and Astarte headed towards another room on the same floor.

A red carpet continued towards the room's center.

Cutting off the carpet was a large drawn hexagram magic formation, capable of surrounding a single person.

In the four corners there were four torches emitting purple flames.

Apart from those, it was a cold room with nothing much placed in it.

This room certainly had the feeling of "the ritual will commence now".

The slow-footed me was pulled by Astarte by my hand, and I was led into the room.

The slime made a dirty noise with a *nucha nucha*.

Even so, there's that.

This child really doesn't care about getting dirty from touching a Ghoul's hand.

Even now the sticky slime was clinging to her palm and sleeves.=

I don't know whether it's because Astarte's a child or it's just her own personality, but to be honest, up until now, I think she is the first person who came into contact with me favorably.

If my parents were to see the me of right now...nope, I'll pass.
Imagination cut.

Why was she so kind to me up until now?

As far as I'm concerned, there's the reason of "because I saved her when she was being kidnapped by humans," but I believe it would have been solved in the end even if I wasn't there.

I only changed the scenario where those two humans would be killed by the other demons in the castle.

Besides, didn't Astarte come to my place before that?

Come to think of it, didn't she say it was something like sympathy?

Just sympathy?

Doing this much for that? Normal.

"You know, I feel grateful."

Astarte talked as if she read my mind.

"Living in this castle is super strict."

Really?

Because she's the castle lord's daughter, I thought she could be haughty and selfish as much as she likes.

"Unless I have no work, I'm told to not go to the lower levels . Where I

can go is really only this floor and Rinne's lab. Outside of this castle is a dream within a dream."

Rinne must be that huge breasted woman in a white robe.

Without interjecting, I listened carefully to Astarte's words.

"I really understand that Otou-sama really treasures me. Besides he told me there are a lot of "bad humans". But it's suffocating no matter what, and I go to the lower floors to play sometimes."

"The people in the lower floors are so amusing! There's a person with a human body and a pig's head, and a Mr. Bird that can talk. It's so fun, as if I'm lost in a picture book's world. But everybody runs away when I get close..."

Ah...

I get it.

Astarte is that old man's daughter.

The way I see it, that old man has a rather bad case of musumecon (abbreviation of daughter complex), and if they say anything rude to Astarte and her father hears it, they would be immediately decapitated! I could imagine such a sight easily.

Fearing that, the castle's demons try not to have anything to do with Astarte.

"In the end, because no one wanted to play with me, I went to the

lowest floor, the "Ghoul" floor.."

Ahh. Is that why she always appeared where I was?

"But it's not like the ghouls would listen to me talk. And even if I talked to them, they wouldn't react..."

There, Astarte looked at me in the eye again and talked.

"But I met you."

Me?

"It was my first time. A person who would deal with me as I am. You actually have intelligence, right? Everyone looks down on you, but I think they're wrong."

...

"Because you are my first fr-...friend..."

She was awfully embarrassed at saying the phrase "friend".

There probably was never someone who could talk to her as an equal up until now.

And now, Astarte gulped down her saliva with a "gokuri" (*gulp*) and seriously hesitated as though she were confessing. But she certainly said

it strongly.

"So please be by my side from now on! As a knight!"

I was...

Honestly bewildered.

I never experienced someone strongly requesting something up until now.

Frankly, I didn't know what on earth I should reply her words with.

A moment of silence.

There, my lifeboat appeared.

"Eh~, gohon (*ahem*)"

Behind me, the old man cleared his throat.

"!!"

Astarte was startled! And she floated up a few centimeters from the ground.

"To think you were that excited about this ghoul..."

The figure of a stale sulking father was there.

He has an "I don't care what happens in my life anymore" face.

"I don't care what happens in my life anymore..."

Yep, that's right.

Astarte-san.

"Then shall we start, Astarte?"

While behaving a little sulkish, the old man advanced into the inside of the room.

"Come."

There for the first time, the old man looked at me in the eye and talked to me instead of Astarte.

Come to think of it, this is the first time he's directly talked to me.
He's been ignoring my existence all this time.

But you can say that's natural.

In which world would you find parents who would ask a pet for its opinion in a family council on whether to keep it or not?

I responded to the old man's words and upon advancing, I felt some admiration as if saying "Hoh, it actually has intelligence..."

The rank up ceremony was finished relatively fast.

First the old man and Astarte collected their blood using a silver needle.

I felt somewhat sorry after looking at Astarte grimace with an "Ow...!".

I thought "it would be fine to not do this if you're going to make such a face"...but to this girl, this might be an extremely important ritual.

The old man recited an incantation, their blood formed the shape of words, and it was absorbed into the massive spell book the old man held in his hand.

After that, what happened was the chanting of an boring, pointless, meaningless lengthy incantation like the closing ceremony speech of a school principal.

Frankly, I didn't understand what meaning it might of had, but what I got was what I was accustomed to for this one month.

But as it finally approached its final sentence.

"As the Castle Lord Sanjelman, I command you, corpse, become ferocious. Serve as my knight to rigorously safeguard my magic power!"

"Don" (*bang*)!

As those words began, a shock broke out in the room.

Ashen steam from the center of my body filled the room.

Honestly, it was unbearably smoky.

"Geho! Geho! (*cough cough*) What is this...!"

I muttered this.

...Huh?

"Huh?"

A voice came out. It wasn't a voice given emitted from decayed vocal cords.

It was a proper human voice.

I touched my throat.

There is skin.

It might be gross hearing a guy say this, but it is a silky smooth skin.

At least it is cleaner than the decayed and sludge covered ghoul skin.

My Adam's apple is properly attached. Even though it was flat up until now!

I touched my hands. Nails that I never had until now grew there.

I touched my face. My nose which was function-less up until now was breathing.

I touched my teeth. All of them are there.

All of my body's ghoul features disappeared.

In other words.

"My appearance became that of a human's! Me!"

"Don't be so happy, that's just the rank up's supplementary-stage function. Your body's true nature is large unchanged, and it's not possible to maintain that form for 24 hours."

The old man said that from behind me.

"I'm surprised, did you actually have intelligence from the start? Or is this also a power from the rank-up? I do not know, as I have never heard of anyone strengthening a ghoul..."

"Old man!"

"Who is a old man! I am Count Sanjelman. Call me Count-sama."

"Count-sama!"

"Very good."

"I'm glad~!"

"Uo!?"

Astarte hugged my head.

The force was so strong that I thought it would break my head.

"Like this, we can chat now!"

"So we can chat, you... did you do this for this sake?"

"Yup! I thought you would definitely be able to talk if you became a knight! Besides."

"Besides?"

"Being a "pet" even though you're a friend is just weird!"

"Haha...certainly."

Then, Astarte blinked her eyes in surprise.

"Wait...are you actually a man?"

"Yes I am?"

After her mouth was gaping for one second, Astarte's face quickly dyed red with a "kaa" (*blush*).

And then she suddenly jumped back even though she was innocently hugging me up until now.

"S-s-, sorry!"

"Eh? What is it?"

"It's because I always thought you were a girl...to think you were a man..."

Come to think of it, it was "my first friend".

Well, a girl's friend is a girl, normally.

Thinking about it like this, I understood her reckless and intimate attitude up until now.

Was her innocent friendliness because her companion was of the same sex?"

And now she's blushing because she found out the person inside was in

reality a boy.

I was able to obtain a good mutual understanding with her, but it seems like the number one more fundamental issue wasn't transmitted.

"Uu~..."

"Hey, Astarte. Why did you think I was a girl?"

"Because when I asked about 'things you were good at,' you replied with 'washing and cooking'..."

Ahh, now that she mentions it, something like that was said.

It's just that I couldn't help but become self-independent because of my environment.

It seems a big part of what Astarte thoughtlessly adored me for was my aspect as a teacher in girl power.

"Eh~, sorry. Can I continue?"

The Count-sama gave a forced cough.

"Astarte, does he have a name?"

"Th-, that's right. What's your name? I didn't know it up until now!"

The two of them gazed at my face with a "jii" (*stare*).

Fufu, you want to hear it that much?

Then fine, I shall inform you.

My name is.....

...Huh?

What was it?

I completely forgot because it wasn't really called out recently.

In the first place, I already had a weak attachment towards my name because my parents only called me "you."

No, that is such a boring lie...

I actually hate it. The name I got from those parents.

I just don't want to bring it along to my new start in life.

"I don't have a name. You can decide."

I faced Astarte, and said that.

This person saved the current me.

I wish for this person to decide my name.

I won't have any complaints if the name was decided by Astarte.

"Eh? Then, Pochi or Tama, which one is better?"

(TLN: Stereotypical name for a dog (Pochi) or cat (Tama))

"Sorry, I'll decide on it myself."

Are there no good names?...

Hell has Western-like names.

Because it's hell, an evil sounding name might be better.

Here, I remembered that Astarte's blood was used at the ritual's start.

"Then, please call me "Blood."

"Blood?"

"I was reborn from a ritual that used Astarte's blood. Therefore, Blood."

"It feels kind of 'simple'..."

Isn't it better than Pochi or Tama?

But it feels sort of chuuni for me to do this.

(TLN: Chuuni as in Chuunibyou.)

"Then, nice to meet you! Blood!"

"Same here. Err, Astarte...-sama?"

"You don't have to be so respectful! Because starting from today you're a part of my family!"

Family.

I felt a shock like I had been hit hard on the back of my head at those words.

Family?

What was a family again?

Because the “family” I know was that good-for-nothing family.

But then is Astarte, who was in front of me, my family?

That I’m a member of her family?

Is it...

Is it... alright for me to be here?

Right now, does — someone need me?

“Go buy some sake! You fucking idiot!”

“Don’t do anything more painful to this child!”

“Everything would have been fine if you weren’t born!”

“You ghouls are only useful as our sandbags!”

“I also want a birthday party like the one at Sutou-kun’s house—Otouto-san...”

“We’ll be together from now on!”

“It’s because... you are my first friend...”

Many words said up until now, past or present, are running about

inside of me.

The inside of my head became disordered.

My thinking was obstructed.

"Huh? What is this..."

My field of vision became blurred. My head was hazy and I couldn't think.

What's happening to me?

Somehow I feel as if my face is randomly becoming wet.

Already decaying?

Only after I put my hand on my face there, I realized.

I was crying.

"Wh-, what's wrong!? Are you that against it!?"

Astarte got into a panic with an "oro oro" (*panic*).

"That's wrong."

It wasn't that the current me couldn't understand the feelings and character of my 6 year-old self.

For example, even though it just happened a moment ago, I can

understand the reason why I'm crying.

"It's because I'm too happy..."

And I gave off a small groan like the ones during my time as a Ghoul.

Seeing this, Astarte gently hugged me, who was sitting on the floor, with a gyuu (*hug*).

This time she didn't care whether it was a man or someone of the same sex.

"We'll always be together after this, Blood."

I didn't reply back to those words.

My functions of thought already stopped, because I was frantically resisting the urge to sob.

But within my heart, there was certainly a strong reply.

Best regards, my master—

The second life that I have obtained on god's whim.

I'll devote it all for the sake of this child.

For the sake of Astarte, who was the first to treasure this human, me.

P.S.

You said I “don’t need to be so respectful,” but behind you, your father definitely has a face of “you better be respectful!”...

“Rinne’s Research Journal”

Name: Blood

Race: Ghoul (Kai)

(TLN: Kai as in something like “Remodeled/ Upgraded”. Like in Kantai Collection)

Rank: F+

Skill: Unknown.

Remarks: The first ranked-up ghoul in Hell’s history. I must keep an eye on him as a sample.

The 9th Story: The Knight And Lord

One of Hell's Castles, Astarte Castle.

A servant's early morning.

Come to think of it, the Castle and the Count's daughter had the same name.

Excluding castles named after their location, wouldn't it normally be named something like "Sangelman Castle" after the Castle Lord?

I personally thought that an overprotective musume-con like him was most likely a foolish father, but...well, that was also trying to some degree.

"It suits you, you look passable." (Count)

The old man, no...Lord, Count-sama said while looking at the me in black butler clothes.

I felt like I could accomplish anything now.

Why? Because I am a butler.

"Blood, although you will be acting as Astarte's Knight from now on, there is already a preceding subordinate being supplied with my magic power. Are you aware of this?" (Count)

"Yes, Ol...Count-sama." (Blood)

"Today, you'll help me with my work for a little while." (Count)

"Count-sama instead of Astarte-sama?" (Blood)

"Originally, Astarte's personal care was already being handled by others. Sebastian handles her education as well. You've got to take over that job. Firstly, whether or not you have the ability is up to me, the father. We'll have to measure your ability." (Count)

Seriously?

Honestly, I wasn't good at dealing with this kind of person.

It was obvious that he did not like me.

"If you decide that you want this job, you will need to take over the position of Knight and replenish your Mana supply. Do you understand what I mean?" (Count)

"Also, if you turn back into your original form...a ghoul..." (Count)

"Yes, those who do not work do not eat. In that case, displaying my true form would be unpleasant." (Blood)

"Yes." (Count)

Then the Count suddenly brought out a chessboard from the desk.

"By the way, Blood, can you play chess?" (Count)

"No, I absolutely cannot." (Blood)

The Rook moved at right angles like a Hisha, the Bishop moved diagonally like a Kaku, and the Queen was the strongest, right?

I only knew the rules and pieces of shogi...

"Yeah, let's play it now." (Count)

"Huh!? Now!?" (Blood)

Right now, at five in the morning!?

Was this old man insane?

Heck, could we even play properly?

"My mind cannot be satisfied unless I play chess everyday, in the morning and at night. It is usually against Sebastian, but since you came by, I gave him some time off. Be a dedicated substitute." (Count)

"Yes, I understand." (Blood)

After 10 minutes, I, a beginner, was losing, as expected.

"What, it's already over? This guy has no backbone." (Count)

"Because it is a ghoul." (Rinne)

Honestly, I lost without being able to understand how I was defeated.

I, a chess virgin who didn't know the rules or how to move the pieces properly, naturally lost.

It was unreasonable to disparage a guy who had played for the first time.

"Keep studying, and also, read this." (Count)

"Okay." (Blood)

The Count threw the rulebook, written in Hell's Language, to me as he said that.

After that, the Count stood up from his chair and spoke in a few different languages.

"Then let's go, Blood! To work!" (Count)

"Yes, Count-sama!" (Blood)

What awaited us was an enormous amount of administrative work.

I couldn't understand what the documents skillfully detailed, but it wasn't necessary for me to help.

"Fu, could it be that you still don't know anything?" I was told.

That's right.

Count-sama was a model boss who would allocate work in accordance to his subordinates' abilities.

I was instructed to clean the top-most residential floor. Master's work was completed just as it became time for lunch.

It appeared that a Knight's duty included bringing black tea to their lord.

This was the first time I had brewed black tea since I was born, and the count took a sip.

"Unpleasant." After he said that, he didn't touch it again.

The meal was finished and then there was a brief break that ended with cleaning, again.

Then it was time for the 3 o'clock snack.

We received scones from a frog-man dressed in chef clothes in the dining hall, they came with butter curls as well.

The reason for the break was, "I feel I have to eat more junk food." That said, it was an extremely absurd excuse for this waste of time.

Now, I was working on one thing or another by the Count's orders; trying to complete everything simultaneously ended up in failure.

"So far, it looks like you won't return to the lowest floor." (Count)

The Count told me that when the first day was over.

The last task of the day was chess.

I was thankful for a task that did not consume stamina, but I was once again defeated without being able to understand how.

No surprise there.

Beginning with chess, and ending with chess.

Apparently this was the work of a knight.

I was also instructed by the Count to clean the general soldier's dining room by morning as he went back to his study.

"Tired..."(Blood)

No, I wasn't physically tired, but mentally?

I decided to take a break before going into the dining room to clean.

Those who were recognized as a knight were given a personal room in the castle.

Of course, my status was below my Lord's and Astarte's, but the way I was treated had improved remarkably when compared to before.

After leaving my room, I took a shower and changed into a new set of butler clothing.

Fidget.

"Hmm?" (Blood)

My bed had something wriggling in it.

It was worrisome, so I approached the bed and pulled the blanket back.

"Nu..."(?)

Astarte was sleeping there.

"Astarte!" (Blood)

"Oh, good morning Blood..." (Astarte)

"It's nighttime!" (Blood)

"What're you thinking, sleeping in a place like this..." (Blood)

"Because I couldn't talk to you at all today, at least at night..." (Astarte)

Astarte mumbled while rubbing her eyes.

My reasoning took a hit.

What a brave little girl.

A supreme little girl.

However, it was regrettable that I was unable to respond to that desire.

"Sorry Astarte. I have to finish working."

Then, I felt that my body would soon become sluggish.

Uh-oh, shit. To revert...

I had received a human form due to the rank up. I reached the conclusion that I was reverting to my old self, not that it was necessary to be a humanoid demon like Astarte. A ghoul is a ghoul.

According to that white-coated woman called Rinne, it seemed that I could only maintain a human form for 18 hours a day.

For the remaining six hours, I would have the appearance of a normal ghoul.

Fortunately, sleep was unnecessary for ghouls.

After six hours of recovery, I would be able to resume activity in my human form.

During the time that others slept, I would revert.

Today, I transformed just after 5:00AM, it was currently 11:00PM.

It had been exactly 18 hours of activity.

Honestly, I had forgotten about this weakness after being so busy.

It was honestly unreasonable, cleaning the dining room and other places until morning!

It was impossible to move quickly with this ghoul body, and I would start to ooze, dirtying wherever I had just cleaned!

"Hmm? Blood will sleep too? Good night..." (Astarte)

Astarte, who had been half asleep, went back to sleep without noticing my anxiety.

I had to waste six hours, after all.

"Dangeroooooouusss!!"

5:00AM.

I went to the dining room at full speed so that I would transform.

I had promptly forgotten my homework on the first day!

That was an acceptable reason to be fired!

'Working 18 hours without sleeping at night is impossible'?

I don't consider such conditions a challenge!

At the very least, I would do the best that I possibly could; even I would cheat when it came to cleaning!

"I desperately did my best." Do not forget to produce that kind of feeling!

There was no choice but to do it!

Advancing in order to be with Astarte!!

Yeaaaaaaah!!

...Hmm?

I ran into the dining room at full speed and was stunned.

The cleaning had already been done.

What kind of person besides a miserly mother-in-law could clean so perfectly?

"That was slow."

Even though it was early morning, the human frog waiter had not yet arrived and only one man was present.

The other party's appearance was familiar.

A butler that had appeared often when I was a ghoul, in order to bring back Astarte, his name—

"Sebastian!!...sama!!"

"I don't mind being called just Sebastian. Our classes are equal. I'm just your senior by 100 years." (Sebastian)

There was a resistance to dropping honorifics even if he said that...

Okay, I'll try attaching "-san" to his name.

"Sebastian-san. Umm, this is!?" (Blood)

I asked while pointing at the nonexistent faults in the clean dining room.

"Had I not been able to report to Count-sama? Really...there is no excuse for deliberately giving low grade work to inferior people."

That wasn't an answer...

What was there left for me to do in this shiny dining room?

Then, as if he read my mind, Sebastian said,

"I heard you defended Lord Astarte-sama that day. Thank you for that. Thank you." (Sebastian)

That day.

The day when two people invaded.

"I understand the situation. Count-sama is being unreasonable and making you do everything. I have to help as much as possible."
(Sebastian)

Seriously?

You are a good person, Sebastian.

Helping from the shadows has its worth.

After giving me his kind advice, Sebastian began to walk behind me.

"Count-sama is holding a grudge. That man only thinks about his daughter. It's only when Astarte-sama is involved...that he becomes a demon." (Sebastian)

Hey, weren't you going to say great things now?

Eat **** to your boss?

"There is just a trace of a good person at his roots...Although the roots are beginning to become a little rotten as they grow.."(Sebastian)

That wasn't praise at all...

Well, there was the issue with the affair, amongst other things.

When I thought about it now though, that wasn't conclusive evidence of cheating, only that the Count had been pampered by a woman.

It was amazing to see that Astarte got what she wanted.

The old man's lack of popularity has been a little worrying.

It seemed like it would end in betrayal at a critical moment, Sebastian.

"Thank you for the precious offer, however your assistance isn't necessarily a good thing." (Blood)

"You shouldn't try to act so strong. Yeah, occasionally the young should rely on the old." (Sebastian)

"It's not that. It's because it's sooo fun!" (Blood)

"Ho?" (Sebastian)

"It can't be helped, I've had to continuously stand straight without having anything much to do until now...I'm very happy to finally work. I had no idea it was so fun to be able to work for someone!" (Blood)

If I was asked about why I worked so hard, I would answer that it was for Astarte and also for myself.

To satisfy that old man in order to be recognized as Astarte's Knight.

My heart leapt just from imagining it.

It had never felt so rewarding to work.

I bowed to Sebastian.

"Sebastian-san, I need your help, but please do not take this pleasure from me! Ah! For cleaning the dining room, thank you!" (Blood)

I voiced my request and Sebastian was nice about it! He smiled, revealing clean white teeth and gums unbefitting of one past their prime.

"In that case, work hard! When you're in trouble, just say so!"
(Sebastian)

"I will!" (Blood)

After that, Sebastian left the dining room.

"He might end up becoming more than just a rookie, Count-sama."

Sebastian sneakily muttered.

"What?"

"Nothing."

Sebastian responded as he walked away.

"By the way, Sebastian-san, isn't your tone vastly different from before?"
(Blood)

"It isn't! Towards the Lord's daughter this is normal, normal." (Sebastian)

For the time being, thanks to Sebastian, my life had been narrowly preserved.

I sincerely appreciated that.

Now, that musume-con father was speechless.

【Rinne's Research Journal】

Name: Sebastian-sama

Race: Insect

Rank: E

Skill: Accomplished as a butler

Remarks: Now waning but, it seems that he used to be a go-getter

The 10th Story: Bodacious Boobs and Scones

"Good morning, Rinne-san!" (Blood)

I exclaimed in front of a room on the residential floor.

I was currently in an exceptionally special part of the castle.

Apparently, the floor was originally for guests, but now the entire floor was being rented out to a certain, graciously endowed "lady".

After my voice rang out, I heard a racket coming from inside of the room.

It seems like I woke someone up?

I'm sorry, maybe I shouldn't have been so annoying.

However, a countermeasure had already been prepared!

Before long, I heard a voice through the door.

"Huh? It's still morning?" (Rinne)

It was the grumpy voice of a repeat acquaintance. There was no mistaking the voice of the woman with the white lab coat.

I filled my lungs with air and let my voice blast out from my chest.

"Rinne-san! Good morning! Chissu!" (Blood)

I belted out in my best imitation of an athlete's voice, crossing both of

my hands diligently behind my back and sticking my chest out.

The proper pronunciation was also mimicking the local baseball team's players!

I was the type that did everything using the correct form.

When faced by a healthy baseball boy's spirits like this, most people would listen to a favor .

High school baseball players were not disliked by women.

First of all, even if they refused, you could avoid creating an awkward atmosphere, or causing mental damage to oneself, by using a loud voice.

...Like you care!!

Gacha.

Rinne-san opened the door knowing it was me, the rookie.

"Blood-kun? What do you want so early in the morning?" (Rinne)

"I'm sorry! I have a favor to..."(Blood)

Big-breasted.

!?

A view that was slightly too intense appeared before me.

A dress shirt and underwear.

"That was all of the clothing Rinne-san was wearing." With that, the brief description ended.

Moreover, it was a willful image, with the shirt seemingly on the brink of bursting.

I'll support them instead?

Chest, waist, legs. Chest, waist, legs...

Useless, you know there's nowhere to look.

Since it was rude, I looked away from Rinne-san.

Considering the stigma that sexual harassment carried, if a new employee was seen staring...

However, it seemed that Rinne-san was unaware of my troubles.

"What, sweetie?" (Rinne)

"Oh, yea. Actually, I wanted to search for a way to extend my time in my humanoid state. If Rinne-san knows any details or if there is a secret tool..." (Blood)

I came here in order to discover a method.

As it was, I had to waste six hours every day.

It was a fatal weakness with the huge amount of work I was stuck with.

Whether or not the Count noticed me would depend on if I could utilize those six hours effectively.

Just like the young people that stay up all night, I would be staying up all night as well.

If this person created me, then I think she would know something.
I mean, she was the only one that worked on the monsters.

"Oh, that kind of thing..." (Rinne)

Rinne-san replied while thinking of something with her index finger on her chin.

It might have been because of the rule that "If a girl is tossed into a boy's school, she will be popular even if she's ugly," but this person was also a considerable beauty, right?

I think there are a lot of guys who would fall with just that gesture.
I would probably fall for that too.

"There is." (Rinne)

"Seriously? Thank you!" (Blood)

"Wait a bit." (Rinne)

Rinne-san said before going back into the room.
She returned immediately.

"Here, look at this." (Rinne)

A vial filled with purple liquid was seated in the palm of Rinne-san's hand.

I think I knew what that dangerous looking-thing was, but...

"It's a magic replenishing item...well, it's something like a vitamin."
(Rinne)

"Vitamin pills." (Blood)

It didn't seem like it could pass as coffee...

I felt that it was like a teacher from a certain manga in elementary school...

"In short, you revert to your original form when your energy expires. This will forcefully provide you with energy." (Rinne)

"How much longer can I remain in my humanoid form with this?"
(Blood)

"It extends the limit by one hour per day." (Rinne)

"Is there another way?" (Blood)

"There isn't. Anything more would be unreasonable and cause you to break. If that's what you intend, then I'll gladly refuse to help." (Rinne)

About an hour...

My shoulders slumped.

I had secretly been hoping to be able to move for the full 24 hours.

I came prepared for body modification or something similar, but...

Still, thank goodness.

After all, it wasn't impossible to get more work done with an extra hour.

This was going to be a good harvest.

"So, be grateful!" (Rinne)

After she said that, I reached for the vial.

With a 'swish', she retracted the vial.

"Huh?" (Blood)

"When did I say 'free'?" (Rinne)

"...How much do you want?" (Blood)

"I don't need money. I want to study the extent of decay. I want to research the material, in other words, you." (Rinne)

"...Even dissection is fine, I guess? And hey, the material won't disappear

immediately if you do that. Though, I always thought that the only time I would get an autopsy was when I died.” (Blood)

“HAHAHA! Come here occasionally so that I can collect some good data. Yeah, this is bullying. Too bad.” (Rinne)

That was precisely when I received the vial.

“Also, try to drink it right away.” (Rinne)

“Okay.” (Blood)

Goku~tsu (Gulp)

!!

I was astounded by the taste.

Not too sweet and not too spicy. It was bland, or rather, it had a sticky feeling that wrapped around the throat and the gross part stuck around like an impudent religious solicitation...

It was terrible.

My face convulsed involuntarily.

If the taste could be expressed with words—

“It tastes like a Pocari Sweat that was left standing at room temperature

and then diluted with water...doesn't it!?" (Blood)

"What is Pocari Sweat?" (Rinne)

"Uoooooooo!!" (Blood)

Hisss!

I grabbed a mop and ran down the corridor.

"How noisy, clean quietly." (?)

"Yes! Pardon me!" (Blood)

Slowly, slowly.

"Please do clean up quickly." (?)

"Yes! Pardon me!" (Blood)

Hisss!

"Clean quietly!" (?)

All in all, a few days have passed since then.

I've been ordered to complete a variety of chores since then, but I have

yet to satisfy the count completely.

After the first day, I managed to complete them without Sebastian's help, but it was difficult.

There was a barrage of mistakes.

Day Two: didn't differ much from the first day.

Day Three: was the only day I was scolded abusively.

Day Four: the number of times I was scolded decreased slightly.

On day five, I vividly felt that the status quo had changed.

I finished all the work without delay in the given margin of time before I 'reverted.'

The next day was even easier, to the extent that it would be possible to chat with Astarte all night.

Abruptly, at noon of day six, I tried to talk to the count while he was eating lunch.

"Count-sama, would you like some scones after the meal?" (Blood)

I offered while holding out scones, even though they weren't originally offered that day.

I had unreasonably asked the cook to make them.

The frog-man in the dining room couldn't refuse my request since he was ranked below me.

"Oh, I accept. I usually eat these on the weekend..." (Count)

The count who had been thinking, said so.

"Blood." (Count)

"Yes." (Blood)

"Why do you have those?" (Count)

"Huh?" (Blood)

The Count questioned in disbelief.

"I know that Sebastian prepares these due to our long relationship. The dining room's cook won't prepare them like Sebastian, but why would you prepare a scone that you haven't been asked to prepare?" (Count)

"It was calculated." (Blood)

"Calculated?" (Count)

"Count-sama ate the scones from the dining room 52 times this past year. Once a week, that is. Particularly during the weekend. Seven days earlier, when dashi was served, the count was 'not in the mood.' The Count hasn't eaten scones in seven days. I wondered if you would like to

eat some soon, so I took my chances." (Blood)

"You...No way, you remember all the courses?" (Count)

"Huh? Yes, generally." (a lie) (Blood)

".....Did you just insolently imitate it?" (Count)

"No way..." (Blood)

I worshiped the unusually goofy face that the count momentarily displayed.

Really, the first day's scone disposal left a strong impression.

Now then, to casually gather information.

It's great that today's meal and the Count's preferences matched up, you fool!

However, it seemed to have largely influenced the Count's impression of me.

It took me a week, but I was able to complete most of the orders.

Just a little while ago, I was able to afford the time to pay such attention to detail.

However, there was a job I still couldn't stomach.

It was chess.

It couldn't be helped, since it hadn't been very long.

I read the chess rule book every time there was even a little time to spare.

Every day before reverting, I set up the board, the pieces, and the rule book on the desk and trained for six hours without fail.

Thankfully, I was slowly catching up to the count.

I was impatient, and he secretly picked up on that.

Now that we were no longer at the stage of praising each other, I have earned complete recognition just by losing in chess.

And the next day, day eight.

It was the day I finally defeated the count in chess.

"Check!"

【Rinne's Research Journal】

Name: Pocari Sweat

Race: Beverage

Rank: Unmeasurable

Skill: Magic Replenishment

Remarks: A beverage from a different world which, if left for three days at room temperature and diluted with water, can obtain the same effect as the magic replenishing material I developed. Moreover, such a thing has been circulated at a low cost. Hard to believe, but I would like to try it once if such a thing exists.

